

1 Thessalonians 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

Analysis

For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God—kopon kai mochthon (κόπον καὶ μόχθον, 'labor and toil') indicates exhausting work unto weariness. Paul worked nykta kai hēmeran ergazomenoi (νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν ἐργαζόμενοι, 'working night and day') to support himself through tentmaking while conducting evangelistic ministry. Pros to mē epibarēsai tina hymōn (πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν, 'in order not to burden any of you') explains his motive: removing financial obstacles to the gospel.

Paul's self-support accomplished multiple purposes:

1. proved his motives weren't mercenary
2. modeled diligent work for believers tempted toward idleness (4:11-12; 2 Thess 3:7-10)
3. removed the appearance of exploitation
4. enabled ministry to the poor who couldn't support teachers.

Yet this wasn't legalism—Paul accepted support from established churches (Phil 4:15-16) and taught ministers' right to support (1 Cor 9:14). His voluntary sacrifice demonstrated love exceeding obligation, authenticating the costly gospel he preached.

Historical Context

Tentmaking was portable, skilled labor suitable for traveling missionaries. Paul likely made leather tents for Roman military use (a major industry in Thessalonica, a garrison city). Working 'night and day' meant crafting tents during daylight hours, then teaching and evangelizing evenings. Synagogue teaching on Sabbaths (Acts 17:2) added to this schedule. The physical and emotional exhaustion ('labor and travail') demonstrated Paul's commitment. His self-support was particularly remarkable in a culture where manual labor was considered degrading for educated free men.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's voluntary sacrifice of legitimate financial support challenge contemporary assumptions about pastoral compensation?
2. What role does a minister's willingness to work sacrificially play in validating the gospel's cost and value?
3. How do you distinguish between appropriate financial stewardship in ministry and exploitative patterns disguised as faith?

Interlinear Text

μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν
ye remember For brethren G3588 labour our and G3588
G3421 G1063 G80 G2873 G2257 G2532

μόχθον· νυκτὸς γάρ, καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ
travail night For and day labouring because G3588
G3449 G3571 G1063 G2532 G2250 G2038 G4314

μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ
not be chargeable unto any of you we preached unto you G3588
G3361 G1912 G5100 G5216 G2784 G1519 G5209

εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ
the gospel G3588 of God G2316

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:9 (Parallel theme): And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

Acts 18:3 (Parallel theme): And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Nehemiah 5:15 (References God): But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

Nehemiah 5:18 (Parallel theme): Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

1 Corinthians 4:12 (Parallel theme): And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

1 Corinthians 9:18 (Parallel theme): What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:15 (Parallel theme): But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

1 Timothy 4:10 (References God): For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:6 (Parallel theme): Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

2 Timothy 1:3 (References God): I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;